

CEPPS
Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening



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NEPAL: Strengthening Political Parties, Electoral and Legislative Processes
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This cover memorandum accompanies the detailed reports submitted by the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) of the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for the “Nepal: Strengthening Political Parties, Electoral and Legislative Processes” program:

I. POLITICAL CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

Nepal is undergoing a critical and historic period of political transition. The completion of the Constituent Assembly (CA) elections in April 2008 marked the beginning of the country’s course in drafting a new constitution and solidifying peace after a decade-long civil war. Major political stakeholders anticipate that the drafting process will lay out a new federal government structure more representative than the current centralized system.

However, the country’s political environment has become increasingly unstable and the constitution drafting process has been slow. The poor performance of political parties and the lack of consensus within parliament have fed the loss of public confidence in multi-party politics. Nepalis have characterized parties as being disconnected from citizen concerns outside of Kathmandu, unable to deliver on electoral campaign promises, and beset with corruption and opaque internal processes. In the CA, which acts as an interim parliament, negotiations of political arrangements have been difficult both in the aftermath of a socially and politically destabilizing civil war. In addition, nearly a third of all members are new to elected office and lack the knowledge, skills and resources to fulfill their mandates. Civic engagement within the political process is uneven, and the culture of monitoring and holding political leaders accountable is underdeveloped.

With the adoption of a new constitution by the CA, elections will be held in the near future to choose representatives to a successor legislature and new sub-national governance structures. The legitimacy of such institutions will be critical in managing tensions associated with diverse ethnicities, castes, and political groupings in Nepali society. This underscores the importance of an electoral process that is publicly viewed as credible and that involves the meaningful participation of voters and citizens. Effective public participation in these processes will be critical in determining the legitimacy of the new constitution, the government that is formed in its wake, and the future of country's political stability.

The CEPPS partners have identified the following challenges, organized by program component that will be addressed through this program:

Promote and Strengthen Broader Political Processes

- Organizational weaknesses and the poor governance record of Nepali political parties have led to a loss of public confidence in a multiparty system of democracy.
- Political parties lack internal democratic practices that encourage local party branches and members, including women youth and marginalized groups, to participate in the development of positions on policy issues.
- Political parties lack organized and transparent resource mobilization, and have difficulties in membership recruitment and retention.
- Political parties lack the institutional ability to formulate policy solutions and engage constituents and non-governmental stakeholders in public policy discussions.
- Organizational weaknesses have contributed to the parties' poor electoral preparation and performance. The lack of understanding of citizen concerns and priorities have resulted in party platforms and campaign strategies that were neither relevant nor compelling.
- In preparing for previous elections, candidate selection processes were not transparent, and candidates were not fully aware of their respective parties' policy positions.
- Political parties lack the capacity to plan and organize effective electoral campaigns, and are short on technical and practical resources to conduct campaigns in a competitive political environment.
- There is an underdeveloped culture within civil society and the media of monitoring the activities of political parties.

Strengthen Institutions Involved in Electoral Processes, Either as Actors or Participants

- While the CA election of 2008 was praised a credible electoral process and well managed by the ECN, as expected in the first post-conflict election in a country with as many challenges as Nepal, there were shortcomings and irregularities in the electoral process (voter registration process, limitations of the voter education program, lack of a clear election disputes resolution mechanism).
- In an ongoing spirit of collaboration and transparency, in the post-election period, the ECN undertook a series of post-election evaluations with stakeholders at a national and local level. During the coming years, it will be crucial to maintain the ECN's credibility and build on its institutional capacity to remain a strong pillar in Nepal's ongoing march from war to peace and from a monarchy to a Federal Democratic Republic.
- Although the 2008 general elections were mostly free of violence and administered without widespread problems, shortcomings in Nepal's election process persist, including: problems with the voter list and registration process; interference from some election and government officials; abuse of state resources for campaign purposes; and an inadequate process to resolve election complaints.

- Given the performance of civil society during previous elections, domestic monitoring groups and the media could play a stronger role in observing the elections and fostering greater transparency and fairness in the electoral process.

Improve the democratic functioning of the Constituent Assembly (CA)/Parliament

- Previous parliaments and the current Constituent Assembly have not been effective in their outreach and representation functions.
- There is a shortage of CA members that with the technical expertise to draft and review proposed legislation.
- With the promulgation of the new constitution and the anticipated shift to a federal system of government, it is likely that many newly elected members will have little or no experience in serving as elected representatives.
- Key bodies within parliament institutions are understaffed and under-resourced. The Parliament Secretariat lacks adequate technical knowledge and material resources to effectively support the legislative process.
- The CA/Parliament conducts few committee hearings and does not have a formalized public consultation process. Little interaction exists between members of the CA/Parliament and their constituents, and this lack of interface breeds gaps in government responsiveness to citizen needs, citizen inclusion in public policy development and the accountability of officials and their use of public resources.
- There is little public information on the latest developments in the constitutional development process and the work of the legislature.

II. OBJECTIVES

The program aims to strengthen political parties, electoral and legislative processes in Nepal. To this end, IFES and NDI would be working to achieve the following specific objectives:

IFES

- Ensure that Nepal develops a body of legislation on the electoral process that is comprehensive, coherent and consistent; which conforms to international standards and suits the socio-economic context and new political realities of Nepal.
- Improve the capacity of the ECN to manage future elections and consolidate its mandate and performance through the provision of high level technical assistance in the legal, management and technical aspects of elections and long-term professional development capacity building
- Expand and improve the delivery of voter education by working with the ECN and selected non-governmental organizations to plan, develop, and implement effective voter education programs, with a focus on capacity building, in order to enhance the electorate's understanding of democratic practices and rights, and increase participation in the electoral process.
- Closely monitor, analyze and report on the overall electoral process with a focus on the Election Commission's internal activities and external interaction with other electoral stakeholders.
- Provide a facility that can address unforeseen windows of opportunity that may arise in Nepal's unpredictable post-conflict political and electoral environment, in order to achieve immediate beneficial results in line with the program objectives.

NDI

- Promote and strengthen democratic political processes through political party development assistance.
Sub-Objective 1.A: Improve democratic political party organizational structures and operations
Sub-Objective 1.B: Enhance the electoral competitiveness of political parties
- Strengthen the capacity of citizen oversight of the electoral process.
Sub-Objective 2.A: Enhance the capacity of civil society to monitor elections
Sub-Objective 2.B: Strengthen the capacity of media to report on the electoral process
- Support the institutional strengthening of the Constituent Assembly/ Parliament and improve its capacity to address constituent needs.
Sub-Objective 3.A: Strengthen the legislative drafting capacity of the legislature
Sub-Objective 3.B: Increase communication between representatives and their constituents

III. ACTIVITIES

A. Promote and Strengthen Democratic Political Processes through Political Party Development Assistance

Effective Political Party Organizing and Outreach

NDI organized a series of meetings to introduce the new program to government officials, the Inter Party Women's Alliance (IPWA) and representatives from eight political parties: the Nepali Congress Party (NC), the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist) (CPN-UML), the Sadhbhawana Party (SP), the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), the Madheshi Janadhikar Forum, Nepal - Democratic (MJF, N-D), the Communist Party of Nepal-Marxist Leninist (CPN-ML), the Tarai Madhesh Loktantrik Party (TMLP) and the Madheshi Janadhikar Forum - Nepal (MJF-N). NDI provided a general overview of the political party development program and outlined next steps related to meetings with political party leadership.

Responding to a request from MJF, N-D party leaders, NDI held a presentation at an internal party leadership workshop on the different roles of a political party in a democratic multiparty system and the importance of political party organization and management.

Cross Party Consensus Building

NDI met with ECN consultant Kare Vollan to discuss the commission's work on political party law reform, a code of conduct and electoral laws, and ways in which NDI could contribute to the ongoing process.

B. Strengthen Institutions Involved in Electoral Processes, Either as Actors or Participants

Technical Assistance to the ECN in the Legal, Management and Technical Aspects of Elections

IFES provided Ongoing day-to-day technical advice to the ECN's drafting sub-committee in the development of concept papers for the new political party law, and the electoral management and electoral dispute resolution sections of the new electoral law. IFES also facilitated collection of

inputs from a wide selection of stakeholders obtained at an introductory workshop on electoral dispute resolution mechanisms.

Strengthen ECN's Electoral Management Capacity

IFES in collaboration with ECN had facilitated development of a Voter Registration Training Resources Manual for Trainers, a Registration Handbook for voter registration centre staff, an Enumerators Handbook, and a Training video. IFES also made recommendation to ECN's voter registration policies and procedures as a result of survey findings, input from training support team and monitoring of registration centers.

Capacity Building

IFES, in collaboration with BRIDGE partners, revised BRIDGE program for the next 12 months and prepared for further discussion and finalization with the ECN. IFES also prepared an outlines for a one-day communication and media training for ECN members and senior officials and for two training programs on voter registration for senior media executives and TV, radio and newspaper reporters.

Expand and Improve Delivery of Voter Education

IFES recruited international and national voter education consultants to work in close collaboration with the ECN on the voter education strategy. IFES technical team facilitated development of the working document summarizing current VR voter education products and activities and recommendations made as to how they can be improved.

IFES worked with ECN on engaging local radio stations for phase 2 of the voter registration program.

C. Support the Institutional Strengthening of the Constituent Assembly/Parliament and Improve its Capacity to Address Constituent Needs

Strengthening the Legislative Drafting and Oversight Capacity of Parliament

NDI met with parliamentary committee chairs and secretaries to introduce the new program and provide a general overview of its objectives and planned activities. NDI and committee chairs discussed possible topics for workshops, support from NDI for holding committee hearings outside the capital, and technical assistance for the sub-committee system. NDI began drafting a manual on committee public hearings for use by committee chairs, members and staff.

Promoting Dialogue between Elected Members and Their Constituencies

NDI and local partner Pro Public discussed the forthcoming public hearings, community dialogues and roundtable discussion component and tentatively selected ten districts to hold the dialogues: Dhankuta and Siraha from the eastern region; Nuwakot and Bara from central region; Syangja and Kapilvastu from the western region; Surkhet and Dailekh from the mid-western region; and Doti and Kanchanpur from the far western region. NDI and Pro Public also identified criteria for selecting local civil society partners in each district.

IV. FOREIGN ASSISTANCE INDICATORS

Foreign Assistance Indicators	IFES	NDI	Quarter Total	FY10 Total
Number of national legislators and national legislative staff attending USG sponsored training or educational events.	N/A	0	0	0
Number of public forums resulting from USG assistance in which national legislators and members of the public interact.	N/A	0	0	0
Number of USG assisted Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) that participate in legislative proceedings and/or engage in advocacy with the legislature.	N/A	0	0	0
Number of local non-governmental and public sector associations supported with USG assistance.	0	0	0	0
Number of domestic election observers trained with USG assistance.	N/A	0	0	0
Number of election observation tools supported by USG.	N/A	0	0	0
Number of local CSOs strengthened that promote electoral reform and/or improvements in the electoral system.	0	0	0	0
Number of individuals who received USG-assisted political party training.	N/A	50	50	50
Number of political parties and political groupings receiving USG assistance to articulate platform and policy agenda effectively.	N/A	0	0	0
Number of election officials trained with USG assistance.	0	N/A	0	0
Number of laws or amendments to ensure credible elections drafted with USG technical assistance.	0	N/A	0	0
Number of electoral administration procedures and systems strengthened with USG assistance.	1 ¹	N/A	1	1
Number of organizations receiving USG support to promote development of and compliance with political finance regulations and legislation.	0	N/A	0	0
Number of USG-assisted political parties implementing programs to increase the number of candidates and members who are women, youth and from marginalized groups.	N/A	0	0	0
Number of CSOs using USG assistance to promote political participation.	N/A	0	0	0
Number of parties that use USG supported public opinion polling to design voter outreach strategies.	N/A	0	0	0
Number of civil society organizations using USG assistance to improve internal organizational capacity.	N/A	0	0	0
Number of participants in USG-funded programs supporting participation and inclusion of traditionally marginalized ethnic minority and/or religious minority groups.	N/A	0	0	0

V. EVALUATION

Lessons Learned

In order for CEPPS/IFES to be able to effectively monitor and evaluate the impact of its activities it is crucial to have a monitoring and evaluation capacity within the ECN. Currently, such a monitoring and evaluation capacity is seriously lacking and the ECN does not record and analyze

¹ Election Commission of Nepal Voter Registration Guidelines.

data in a systematic manner. Working with the ECN to improve its approach to monitoring and evaluation will IFES' key focus in the coming year. The ECN has already agreed in principle that it would be helpful for IFES to recruit a national monitoring and evaluation expert to be based in the ECN to help put systems in place and establish a more rigorous approach to data management and monitoring and evaluation.

Challenges

External factors have presented some challenges to the program during the start-up phase. The ongoing deadlock in the CA over the election of a prime minister and internal party conflicts and factionalism have negatively affected parties' and parliamentary leaders' timely responses to NDI requests for meetings or consultations. Party and parliamentary leadership appear to be consumed by the political crisis in the country, and parties have expressed insecurities about the stability of the political system.

An ongoing challenge will be engaging the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (aka Maoists) in the overall program and managing NDI's relationship with it. The Maoists are transitioning from armed conflict to peaceful political participation, which can have an impact on their degree of interest, receptivity, and processing of technical assistance. Remaining mindful of this context is critical to ensuring that the program offers the party meaningful and constructive assistance.

While the level of collaboration and coordination between IFES and UNDP's Electoral Support program continued to be excellent, it has become clearer during phase 1 of the voter registration project ECN's secretariat lack of electoral management experience and the significant capacity building support that is required from both IFES and UNDP. However, with the provision of appropriately targeted technical assistance (voter education, training) both ECN staff and voter will benefit greatly in a longer term.

Due to the delay in the start up of CEPPS III award IFES' voter education and training international and national experts for the voter registration process were recruited only in August 2010, by which time the ECN had already implemented many decisions relating to the voter education and training programs. This meant that the consultant teams faced a challenging time, in many instances having to work to very tight deadlines with the ECN.

Divisions between the ECN secretariat and the Commission have been a major issue this reporting period, and have exacerbated the problem of getting activities and materials approved within the ECN in a timely manner.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Promote and strengthen democratic political processes through political party development assistance

- NDI will begin an assessment of political parties in the eastern and central region, meeting with various party members and representatives of civil society organizations in Dhankuta, Terathum, Dhulikhel and Dolakha.

- NDI and the IPWA will organize a training of trainers session in Kathmandu for women activists and party members, expand its district committees and conduct capacity building workshops in the remaining districts.

Strengthen Institutions Involved in Electoral Processes, Either as Actors or Participants

Strengthening Democratic Legal Framework

- IFES will finalise a draft concept papers for the *Electoral Management Body* and *Electoral Dispute Resolution* sections of the electoral law, finalize concepts on electoral campaigns, electoral processes, and conduct national and/or regional workshops on the papers.

Strengthening Electoral Management Capacity of the ECN

- IFES will support ECN in its implementation of Voter Registration (Phase 1, 2), through assistance in planning and delivery of cascaded trainings, production of enumeration forms, monitoring and evaluation of the VR process.
- IFES will continue working with the ECN to ensure gender inclusion is taken into account in programmatic activities and the implementation of the recommendations from the gender mapping assessment, following the ECN's approval of the report which is anticipated early in the next reporting period.

Expanding and Improving the Delivery of Voter Education

- IFES will continue to provide technical, capacity building and material support to the ECN's voter education campaign for the voter registration and identification project, working with the ECN to review the voter education effort for phase 1 of the voter registration program and work with them to modify and enhance it for the roll-out of the subsequent phases. Specifically, IFES will work with the selected companies to produce and broadcast the radio and TV PSA for young people aged 16 and 25, as well as directly contracting local radio stations to help the ECN more effectively target voter education messages at the local level.
- IFES will enhance the voter education effort to date through the selection and award of sub-grants to local civil society organizations to develop and deliver voter education campaigns for phases 2 and 3 of the program.

Support the Institutional Strengthening of the Constituent Assembly/Parliament and Improve its Capacity to Address Constituent Needs

- NDI will hold an introductory workshop for committee chairs and staff to discuss international practices, assess Nepal's experience with effective committee work and to plan for committee-specific activities.
- NDI will consult with the Parliament Secretariat and universities to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the parliamentary internship program. NDI will work with faculties from various universities to solicit applications.
- NDI and Pro Public will identify and select potential district-level NGOs in 10 targeted districts to implement public hearings, community dialogues and round table discussions.

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July – September 2010, Quarterly Report
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I. SUMMARY

This reporting period has been characterized by ongoing political deadlock and a complete halt of the constitution drafting process. Despite a series of nine prime ministerial elections since Prime Minister Nepal stepped down on 30 June, 2010, seven of which took place this reporting period, the country has failed to elect a new prime minister and no immediate resolution is in sight due to the interim constitution requiring a majority of all existing members of the legislature-parliament for the election of the prime minister.

It has also been a challenging time for the Election Commission of Nepal (ECN), with the launch of phase 1 of its voter registration program to update the voter registry using photographs and fingerprints in 58 municipalities, a major logistical undertaking. In order to be able to register for the new voters list, citizens are required to show a citizenship certificate, the responsibility for which lies with the Home Ministry. However, towards the end of the reporting period, Madhes-based parties launched a campaign for the public to boycott the voter registration program, insisting on using the previous voters list for the eligibility to register, not the citizenship certificates. This generated a lot of negative publicity and mixed messages in the press and plunged the ECN into crisis talks with the prime minister and Ministry of Home. At the end of the reporting period, the ECN are still adamant that this policy will not be changed, although the issue is far from resolved.

Against this backdrop, as part of the new USAID funded CEPPS program to strengthen political parties, electoral and legislative processes, IFES has made a significant contribution to the work of the ECN. During this quarter, in close liaison with UNDP's Electoral Support Project (ESP), a key focus of IFES' work has been technical and capacity building support for the implementation of phase 1 of the voter registration with photo project. In addition, IFES has continued to support the ECN with its electoral legal reform initiative, with good progress being made in this area.

In terms of electoral legal reform, IFES has integrated its CEPPS III and Norwegian funded programs to provide comprehensive assistance, along with International IDEA, to the ECN and other stakeholders in the development of a new political party law and a new electoral law. Working with the ECN's drafting subcommittee, IFES' CEPPS III program in this reporting period took the lead on the legal framework for electoral management bodies, and provided information support for political party law and electoral dispute resolution issues. A tight timetable for development and public discussion of concept papers for each section of the electoral law to allow drafting of both political and electoral laws to be completed by end February 2011 was agreed with ECN early in the reporting period. However, the entry of International IDEA resulted in ECN proposing amendments to the timetable, which has yet to be finalized. A concept paper for a new political party law was prepared, discussed at a national workshop for stakeholders, and revised. A draft concept paper on the section of the electoral law on electoral management bodies has been prepared for discussion, and following a BRIDGE workshop for stakeholders on electoral dispute resolution work has commenced on a draft concept paper for this section of the law.

Election management strengthening efforts have focused on the ECN's major voter registration with photo project. Data from the survey of the pilot registration project was analysed and

recommendation presented to the ECN. The survey data showed significant problems in comprehensiveness of the pilot projects coverage (40% of those eligible had not registered), penetration of voter education and accuracy of voter registry data recorded. The high proportion of young people who did not have the citizenship certificates, necessary to use as proof of eligibility to register, was also highlighted by IFES to ECN. While ECN did not accept much of the survey data, it did take some measures to improve the accuracy rate and eventually approved some education materials targeted at motivating young people.

IFES has managed a technical support team that has worked with the ECN to assist with planning and delivering cascade training of registration staff and developing training material for phase 1 of the voter registration project, being implemented in 58 municipalities. The training support team assisted in the development of the procedural guidelines for voter registration, and developed training materials – a Training Resources Manual for Trainers, a Registration Handbook, an Enumerators Handbook and a training video - that were completed in time to be used for phase 1 training. However, delays and confusion in the ECN's approval process, exacerbated by uncertainty over policy caused by the challenge from Madhes-based parties of the requirement for citizenship certificates, has meant that none of the materials have yet been approved for distribution. 'Pirate' electronic copies of the draft manuals have been distributed to districts by ECN staff, and where these had been copied for training sessions and registration centres, IFES' monitoring found that they had had a significant impact on training and staff performance. As a result of these monitoring activities, IFES made a number of suggestions to the ECN for improvements to voter registration during phase 2 of the program, which ECN is in the process of implementing.

IFES has continued to take a lead role on working with the ECN on the voter education components of the voter registration with photo project, recruiting a dedicated international and national consultants to spearhead this work. In addition to day-to-day support to the ECN staff working on voter education, IFES has ensured that key voter education materials have been incorporated into the voter registration training materials, prepared a voter education working document summarizing current voter education products and how they can be improved, as well as a draft voter education strategy. Based on the findings from IFES' survey on the pilot voter registration program, which highlighted the lack of participation among young people aged 16-25, IFES has worked with the ECN to prepare 30 second TV and radio PSAs specifically targeting this young audience, and has identified the companies to carry out the production and broadcasting work for these PSAs in the next reporting period.

The UNDP, International IDEA and IFES supported BRIDGE program continued this reporting period, with a two-day electoral dispute resolution workshop taking place funded by International IDEA. In addition, the BRIDGE partners agreed a workplan for the next six months, with a strong gender focus. IFES is also leading on an initiative to prepare for a series of three media trainings for ECN staff, senior media officials and journalists, with the aim of building the media and communication skills of key ECN staff and increasing the knowledge and understanding of the voter registration program among the media.

IFES continues to have a strong working relationship with the ECN. However, the implementation of phase 1 of the voter registration program has highlighted the degree to which the ECN's secretariat requires significant capacity building support. Coupled with this are divisions between the secretariat and the Commission and an inconsistent and convoluted decision making process. These factors have presented considerable challenges working with the ECN, particularly when operating against tight deadlines. In spite of this, IFES has been able to make important contributions to the work of the commission, particularly in the areas of voter education, the

development of training materials in support of the voter registration process and electoral legal reform.

II. BACKGROUND

Political Update

This reporting period has been marked by intense polarisation among the major political actors that has derailed both the constitution-making process as well as the peace process. Nearly three months since the extension of the Constituent Assembly (CA) and the adoption of a nine-month timeline for the promulgation of the constitution, little has been done to take the constitution drafting or peace process forward.

Despite a series of nine prime ministerial contests since Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal's resignation on June 30, the country has failed to elect a new prime minister. Both the candidates from the NC as well as the UCPN-Maoist failed to garner support from either CPN-UML (the third largest in parliament) or the Madhesi front (the fourth largest in parliament with 82 seats) that is crucial to get the constitutionally-required simple majority of all existing members of the legislature-parliament. In spite of requests by UCPN (Maoist) and CPN-UML to stop the ongoing process of electing the prime minister and look for alternatives to the stalemate, according to the existing parameters of the interim constitution and the prevailing rules of procedure, the process will have to continue until a new prime minister is finally elected.

Amid this political wrestling, UNMIN's term has been extended for another four months till January 2011. The extension was only achieved on September 15, the date on which UNMIN's term expired. While the NC and UML emphasized that the UNMIN role should be minimized, the UCPN-Maoists asserted that the UNMIN's role was crucial to the peace process.

Meanwhile, the Nepali Congress conducted its twelfth General Convention from September 17-21. The Convention elected a new President as well as other executive members including the general secretary, treasurer and 61 central committee members. This was the party's first convention since the unification of the Nepali Congress and Nepali Congress-(Democratic) in September 2007.

The constitution drafting process has been overshadowed by the ongoing prime ministerial contests. Despite the adoption of a new work plan, the constitution drafting process has not made any progress. In mid July, the three major parties had reached an agreement regarding the formation of a State Restructuring Committee (SRC) that foresaw the selection of a maximum of seven expert members by the new prime minister. The parties agreed not to appoint any political leaders, and that the Committee would be given a two-month tenure beginning on 31 July. Given the uncertainty over the election of the new Prime Minister, and the opposition expressed by Madhes-based parties and others to such a Committee, the establishment of the SRC and the related agreements remain uncertain.

The ECN has faced a busy and challenging period. On 12 September, the ECN publicly launched phase 1 of its program to recreate the voter register including photographs and fingerprints, a major logistical undertaking. Phase 1 covers 58 municipalities. In line with a draft amendment to the Electoral Rolls Act, which is supported by all major parties but has not been passed by the CA, citizens are required to show a citizenship certificate in order to be eligible to register. The responsibility for issuing the citizen certificates lies with the Home Ministry. This decision was taken to help overcome the problems of the current voter registry, which is widely held to be

inflated with deceased, ineligible and duplicate voters. However, towards the end of the reporting period, Madhes-based parties launched a campaign urging the public not to participate in the voter registration program, insisting that the methods of identification specified in the current law (the Electoral Roll Act of 2007) and previous voters' list should be used as the basis for eligibility, not citizenship certificates. This led to the registration program being halted in five municipalities and partially affected in a further two municipalities, all in the Terai. This generated a lot of negative publicity in the press and plunged the ECN into crisis talks with the Prime Minister and Home Ministry. At the end of this reporting period, the ECN was still adamant that this policy will not be changed; however, the issue is far from resolved.

Program Objectives

Under the Consortium of Elections and Political Strengthening (CEPPS III), IFES activities will support one of the three principal objectives as detailed by USAID: 2) Strengthen Institutions Involved in Electoral Processes, Either as Actors or Participants and sub-objectives:

- A) Strengthen democratic legal framework
- B) Strengthen the ECN's electoral management capacity and
- C) Expand and improve delivery of voter education

In support of the above, IFES will achieve the following objectives:

- To ensure that Nepal develops a body of legislation on the electoral process that is comprehensive, coherent and consistent; which conforms to international standards and suits the socio-economic context and new political realities of Nepal.
- To improve the capacity of the ECN to manage future elections and consolidate its mandate and performance through the provision of high level technical assistance in the legal, management and technical aspects of elections and long-term professional development capacity building.
- To expand and improve the delivery of voter education by working with the ECN and selected non-governmental organizations to plan, develop, and implement effective voter education programs, with a focus on capacity building, in order to enhance the electorate's understanding of democratic practices and rights, and increase participation in the electoral process.
- To closely monitor, analyze and report on the overall electoral process with a focus on the Election Commission's internal activities and external interaction with other electoral stakeholders.
- To provide a facility that can address unforeseen windows of opportunity that may arise in Nepal's unpredictable post-conflict political and electoral environment, in order to achieve immediate beneficial results in line with the program objectives.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

1. Strengthening Democratic Legal Framework

During this reporting period IFES has provided significant technical and capacity building support to the ECN and other stakeholders in the development of concept papers for a new political party law, and the electoral management body and electoral dispute resolution sections of a new electoral law.

Activity 1.1 – Technical Assistance

Summary: IFES has continued to collaborate with the ECN in finalising timetables for the development of new political party and electoral laws and with ECN and other stakeholders in developing concept papers for the components of these laws in a systematic fashion. With the commencement of the CEPPS III program, IFES has two programs for electoral law reform, one funded under CEPPS III and one funded by the Norwegian government. A division of responsibilities between these two programs has been determined, with each taking the lead role for specific sections of the laws. In the current reporting period IFES' CEPPS III program has taken the lead on the electoral management body section of the electoral law, and provided support to the Norwegian funded IFES program on issues related to the political party law, and to IFES' partner International IDEA on electoral dispute resolution mechanisms.

IFES has had continuing discussions with the Joint Secretary/Legal and members of the ECN on the timetable for electoral legal reform. By mid-August IFES had assisted the ECN to develop a timetable which would see draft political party and electoral laws - with gaps or alternatives provided for issues to be constitutionally decided - developed by end-February 2011. The development process envisaged a cycle of 22 days for each section of the draft law, during which time a concept paper would be developed by the ECN's sub-drafting committee with IFES assistance, discussed at national and/or regional workshops, and modified as a result of public input. This would then allow sufficient time for public discussion of the drafts and Cabinet consideration so that the proposal of electoral bills to the CA would closely follow the introduction of a new Constitution, if this happened as currently timetabled in May 2011. Following the entry of International IDEA as an additional partner of the ECN in electoral law reform, in late August the ECN approved an inconsistent timetable and process for developing one section of the law - on electoral dispute resolution, and proposed an extended drafting process ending in May 2001. As at the end of the reporting period ECN/IFES/International IDEA discussions are continuing to harmonize the legal reform timetable.

At end-July IFES engaged a highly regarded Nepali legal drafter, Kailash Prasad Subedi, to work under Norwegian funding with IFES' Norwegian funded consultant, Kare Vollan, in advising ECN, stakeholders and the electoral law drafting subcommittee on the concept papers and drafts of the political party and electoral laws. Working in a complementary manner during this reporting period, the two IFES programs: prepared a concept paper on the political party law in consultation with ECN and stakeholders, conducted a Norwegian-funded workshop on 13 September on this paper, for political parties, government officials, CSOs, academics, and ECN members and incorporated the results of this workshop into the concept paper; prepared a draft concept paper on the electoral management section of the electoral law and supported two meetings of the ECN's drafting subcommittee to discuss this; provided information support to a BRIDGE workshop organized by International IDEA on electoral dispute resolution mechanisms, for representatives of political

parties, lawyers, judges, ECN staff, CSOs and media; and subsequently commenced drafting a concept paper on the electoral dispute resolution section of the electoral legal framework. The concept papers on electoral management bodies and electoral dispute resolution are scheduled to be discussed at IFES and International IDEA- funded workshops held during the next reporting period.

Results: Ongoing day-to-day technical advice to the ECN's drafting sub-committee in the development of concept papers for the new political party law, and the electoral management and electoral dispute resolution sections of the new electoral law. Finalization of a concept paper for the political party law, following a workshop involving political parties and other stakeholders. With IFES input, two drafting sub-committee meetings on concept paper for electoral management body section of the electoral law have reached substantial agreement on most key issues. Inputs from a wide selection of stakeholders obtained at an introductory workshop on electoral dispute resolution mechanisms.

Activity 1.2 – Capacity Building

Summary: IFES has used day-to-day discussions with ECN staff, meetings with political party and civil society stakeholders and meetings of the ECN drafting subcommittee to provide information on international examples of good practice in electoral legal frameworks. During this period IFES has provided international examples and commentaries on political party laws, and legal frameworks for electoral management bodies and electoral dispute resolution to ECN counterparts and representatives from the Home, Law and Attorney-General's ministries involved in the ECN's drafting subcommittee. Discussions with IFES on this information have significantly increased knowledge of international good practice. More importantly, they have led to less negative and increasingly supportive attitudes in these departmental representatives towards reform of the electoral legal framework in line with good practice, particularly in relation to the functioning of the ECN. IFES has also actively participated in a discussion hosted by CCD on electoral systems, attended by CSOs, media and political party representatives that focused on treatment of minority groups. This work has been complemented by IFES consultant Kare Volla in one-on-one meetings with influential figures, and in the stakeholder workshop held in early September on the concept paper for the political party law.

Results: Increased knowledge of ECN's legal department, drafting subcommittee members and civil society and political party stakeholders of international good practices in legal frameworks for political parties, electoral management bodies and electoral dispute resolution. International precedents are increasingly cited in concept paper discussions by drafting subcommittee members.

2. Strengthening Electoral Management Capacity of the ECN

During this reporting period, IFES has provided significant technical and capacity building support to the ECN in the planning and policy development for its new voter registration with photo project and the implementation of phase 1 of this project, particularly in relation to training of registration staff.

Activity 2.1 – Technical Assistance

a) Voter Registration

ECN has split the voter registration with photo program into three phases. In each phase ECN plans two parts, with voter registration equipment and trained staff consecutively covering two wards in

each municipality/district. Despite advice to ECN from IFES, and suggestions to ECN from donors and UNDP that the commencement of phase 1 of voter registration should be delayed to allow for more comprehensive pre-publicity of the program, better planned training and finalisation/distribution of training materials, and a campaign to motivate those without citizenship certificates to obtain them, the ECN refused to deviate from its timetable. Locally focused voter education in relevant wards commenced 7 September, enumeration of households in these wards commenced 12 September and voter registration centres opened on 15 September.

To assist the ECN in finalizing its plans for the voter registration with photo project, in early August IFES analysed and presented the results of a survey conducted with CEPPS II funds in June 2010 of the April 2010 pilot voter registration project (see Annex 1). The survey found that a large proportion (40%) of those eligible to register during the pilot registration project could not be found on the voters register; that the most significant reason for not registering was lack of the citizenship certificate issued by Home Ministry required as proof of eligibility to register; that the young are much more likely, and women a little more likely, not to have a citizenship certificate; that lack of motivation to obtain a citizenship certificate and inaccessibility of certificate issuing offices were the major reasons why these persons did not have a citizenship certificate; that over a third of those in the pilot area did not know about the pilot registration before it commenced; and that there was a relatively high level of errors (17%) in the data recorded in the pilot voter registers.

As a result of these findings, in early August IFES made recommendations to ECN on: improvements to timing and content of voter education activities; more intensive training of ECN staff, especially in recording and processing of registration data; changes to registration procedures to deal with non static eligible voters; the clarification of the legal basis for requiring a citizenship certificate as proof of eligibility for registration; and the implementation of an education campaign before the commencement of voter registration to motivate people, especially the young and women, to obtain their citizenship certificates. The ECN rejected many of the survey results, claiming that they conflicted with anecdotal evidence provided by their field staff. However ECN did propose to implement measures to alleviate some issues identified by the survey: intensifying and lengthening the training for computer operators to five days, and providing for offices to be open throughout the registration period to provide registration services for those who were absent during the enumeration/registration period in their area.

The ECN refused to become engaged directly in urging people to obtain their citizenship certificates as they held that this was solely a matter for Home Ministry. The citizenship certificate issue was to lead to significant problems for the ECN after the commencement of voter registration, and as noted in the voter education report below, IFES was later able to assist ECN to prepare voter education materials indirectly addressing this issue. IFES also briefed donors and other implementing partner agencies on the survey findings and IFES' recommendations on 20 August.

IFES had identified training of voter registration staff as a key issue in ensuring an effective delivery of the voter registration program. Staff turnover within ECN headquarters and district election offices had left very little institutional experience of past voter registration activities, and no records of past registration planning or training activities had been retained by ECN. The training needs of the ECN, and the ECN's attitudes to training are constantly evolving, which has required a flexible approach by IFES.

In conjunction with partner UNDP/ESP, IFES provided a technical support team to assist ECN in planning training, and developing materials for and delivering cascade training to the nearly 5,300 staff to be engaged for phase 1 of voter registration. On 9 August IFES engaged Radhika Regmi, a

management consultant who had worked extensively with Government of Nepal institutions, on a six month contract as a national training consultant, to work as a team with Ian Smith, a Canadian training consultant engaged by UNDP–ESP at end-July with Danida funding. IFES provided management oversight and high level technical guidance for both members of the team. From a program management perspective this joint team approach has worked extremely well.

By the time these consultants had been recruited, ECN had already developed micro plans for the cascade training, though with no overall strategy or coherent policy background in place. The training support team's major tasks were to (a) review the cascade training plans and assist ECN in finalising details of the cascade training program and (b) develop materials to be used during training sessions and as reference materials during implementation of voter registration.

Following review of the ECN's plans for cascade training the training support team recommended a number of changes to the training plan. Major recommended changes, including a recommendation to extend the training of district level staff/trainers to a three day residential course to allow adequate coverage of all content, were rejected by the ECN secretariat. There was a marked reluctance on the part of the ECN secretariat to accept any advice that would require any changes to their micro planning, or the adoption of an overall training strategy. Direct IFES support of training sessions was hindered by ECN's inability to finalise a training timetable and insistence on funding of training through the ECN's district election offices. IFES observed trainer training in both Kathmandu and Pokhara and made recommendations on session content and increasing the length of training. These were only partially accepted by ECN.

The training team identified early the need for a series of simply expressed manuals to be used during training, and later as reference materials for registration staff. The team developed four products: a Voter Registration Training Resources Manual for Trainers; a Registration Handbook for voter registration centre staff; an Enumerators Handbook, and a Training Video. All materials were developed in very close collaboration with the ECN's voter registration team.

The Voter Registration Training Resource Manual for Trainers provides a session by session template for training of enumeration and registration staff. Activities are designed to be interactive, hands-on and practical. The Registration Handbook is designed as a reference guide for registration computer operators and registration place managers. The Handbook breaks down the process of voter registration and data input into easy to understand steps, with practical tips for using the registration equipment. The Enumerators Handbook is a reference guide for enumerators and registration place managers, which breaks down the process of voter education and enumeration into easy to understand steps, complemented by a workplan template. Working closely with the ECN and a local video production company, Interface, a 26 minute training video was produced which outlines the process and procedures of voter education, enumeration, and voter registration in detail. The video is designed for enumerators, voter registration staff, registration place managers, resource persons, district election officers and other interested stakeholders, such as the media and political parties. The video could also be used to train party agents and observers.

IFES had made arrangements to print 1,000 copies of the Registration Handbook, 4,400 copies of the Enumerators Handbook, and produce 1,200 copies of the training video for phase 1 of registration. Drafts of the print Trainers Manual and Handbooks were provided to the ECN for approval on 18/19 August, in time to have some copies available for the beginning of training of staff for phase 1 of voter registration on 22 August. Since then the drafts have bounced back and forward between the ECN secretariat and ECN members, with no agreement between them on final content. The absence from Nepal of both the Acting Chief Commissioner and the Joint Secretary

in charge of voter registration in the lead up to and during voter registration training did not assist the materials development and approval process. There was also a lack of clarity within ECN as to who had authority to review and approve documents and the order of hierarchy of approval.

Training Handbooks were thus not available for voter registration training sessions. Approvals were finally imminent when the dispute between Madhes-based parties and ECN over the use of citizenship certificates to prove eligibility to register erupted, threatening potential changes in the procedures described in the Manual and handbooks. As at the end of the reporting period IFES had still not received approval to print. The training video has suffered a similar fate.

However, ECN's IT department had, on its own initiative, distributed electronic copies of the draft Registration Handbooks to all district election offices on 15 September, and electronically sent revised Enumerators and Registration Handbooks to all district election offices and placed them on the ECN website on 29 September. At those locations where these materials had been distributed to trainers and registration staff, they had a significant impact on training and on staff performance. IFES observed both registration training sessions and registration centres where these draft materials were being used. Many of the suggestions of the draft Training Resource Manual were incorporated into phase 1 training. This training was more interactive and hands-on than reported for the pilot registration project. Most of the staff observed in registration centres appeared to understand their roles, some had a photocopied draft Registration Handbook available for reference in the registration centre, and staff appeared to be more effectively collecting biometric data and key entering textual data than in the pilot.

Final versions of these materials are due to be approved and produced during the next reporting period. IFES has also been working with the ECN to jointly produce the enumeration forms required for phases 2 and 3 of voter registration, whose printing has been similarly delayed until the Madhes-based party dispute is resolved.

The development of these materials moved closely in synchronisation with development of the ECN's Official Guidelines for registration staff. Training support team members were closely involved in assisting ECN counterparts in the development of these guidelines, identifying gaps in the procedural framework and proposing solutions. At the training support team's suggestion a number of additional issues were incorporated in the guidelines' content. Recommendations on some critical issues such as loosening the requirements for proof of temporary residency, however, were not accepted. Once the ECN Guidelines were completed, some senior secretariat members argued strongly that there was now no need for any training Handbooks: this opposition has continued to contribute to delays in finalizing ECN approvals of training materials.

IFES has conducted three short voter registration monitoring trips in Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Bhaktapur and Kavre districts on September 17, 19 and 22. Feedback from these trips has been fed into the ECN's own monitoring processes and a number of operational problems have been identified for improvement. A number of suggestions have been made to the ECN and are in the process of being considered and implemented. These suggestions are related to issues such as accreditation of party agents, increasing voter education efforts, closer monitoring of the enumeration process, relaxation of strict daily "targets" for enumeration and registration, tracking registration numbers across the country, more interactive training of enumerators and registration staff, and increased accountability of forms through signing, and recording serial numbers.

Towards the end of the reporting period IFES assisted the ECN in planning numbers and locations of staff to be engaged and trained for phase 2 of the registration project. In late September the ECN

also agreed to plans developed by the training support team for an IFES-supported evaluation workshop of phase 1 voter registration, to be held in late October with selected district election officers and ECN headquarters staff. Results of this workshop will be considered in revising policies/procedures, materials and training for phase 2 of voter registration.

Results: A Voter Registration Training Resources Manual for Trainers, a Registration Handbook for voter registration centre staff, an Enumerators Handbook, and a Training Video prepared in collaboration with ECN staff and continuously modified in response to ECN requirements. Improvements in voter registration training delivery and voter registration staff performance – though more limited than expected due to inability of ECN to approve final versions of the training products. Analysis and reporting on data from survey conducted under CEPPS II program. Improvements to ECN’s voter registration policies and procedures as a result of survey findings, input from training support team and monitoring of registration centres. ECN agreement to program for phase 1 voter registration evaluation workshop. Initial training/staffing plans prepared for phase 2 of voter registration

Activity 2.2 – Capacity Building

a) Implementing a Program of Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections (BRIDGE) Training

Summary: As part of IFES’ ongoing support of the ECN’s BRIDGE program, IFES continues to work with the Commission and its BRIDGE partners, UNDP and International IDEA, to plan for future BRIDGE activities in support of the Commission’s ongoing work. On 24 September the BRIDGE partners met to review the current BRIDGE calendar and adjust it in line with the Commission’s priorities over the next year and areas in which capacity building support is needed. Final determination of the BRIDGE trainings to be conducted in the first year of this program is dependent on the finalization of other BRIDGE partners’ 2011 budgets later in 2010, and consequent ECN agreement. The draft activity plan will be agreed with ECN officials in the next reporting period. IFES will continue to take a lead role in the coordination of the BRIDGE program and encourage the ECN to employ BRIDGE methodologies in Commission training activities for the voter registration project. The ongoing issue of ECN requesting that ECN BRIDGE facilitators receive remuneration from donors for facilitating BRIDGE sessions continues to be a problem in spite of the ECN having agreed in May 2010 to cover these costs. IFES and its BRIDGE partners are taking a firm stance on this. It is hoped that the ECN will agree to cover these costs as they do for all other ECN trainings.

Results: Ongoing positive collaboration between the BRIDGE partners and the ECN. Revised BRIDGE program for the next 12 months prepared for discussion and finalization with the ECN in the next reporting period.

b) Organizational Capacity Building

Summary: The work of the training support team has been instrumental in demonstrating good practices in training development and management processes to often inexperienced ECN secretariat managers. Through collaborative work, collection and archiving of materials and daily professional interactions, the training capacity of individuals in the ECN has been increased, and the ECN is starting to develop a more systematic approach to planning and implementing a training cascade. A productive training relationship has been established through the work of the national training consultant.

The ECN organized a press conference on 12 September to promote the voter registration project. Due to a convoluted press release, the intended messages the ECN wanted to promote were misunderstood and consequently misreported by the media. Furthermore, the subsequent statements made by ECN officials in response to Madhes-based party agitation with regard to citizenship certificates included a number of contradictory and misleading statements. It is clear that the senior officials within the ECN urgently require media and communication training to ensure more coherent and strategic press/media interactions, and that the media need to have a better understanding of the voter registration program. In response to this capacity building requirement, IFES has drafted a package of three media trainings, for both ECN staff and media representatives, which will be carried out in the next reporting period. The first training for ECN Commissioners and the Joint Secretaries will be a one-day intensive media and communication training, to build their skills and confidence in working with the media. The second two training programs will focus on building understanding of the voter registration program with journalists and senior media officials, to build their knowledge of and support for the voter registration program. It is expected that ECN will approve these concepts early in the next reporting period.

Results: More professional approaches to developing training programs are being adopted by the ECN secretariat. Outlines prepared for a one-day communication and media training for ECN members and senior officials and for two training programs on voter registration for senior media executives and TV, radio and newspaper reporters.

3. Expanding and Improving the Delivery of Voter Education

During this reporting period, IFES has provided significant technical and capacity building support to the ECN's voter education campaign for the voter registration with photo project, as well as preparation of materials and organising broadcasting support for phase 1 of this project.

Activity 3.1 *Capacity Building Support to the ECN on the Design, Implementation and Evaluation of Voter Education Campaigns*

Summary: From the experience of the pilot voter registration initiative it was clear that the ECN requires significant support in the preparation of integrated voter education campaigns. The joint appraisal mission of the pilot phase of the project highlighted the need to build the voter education capacity of the ECN and develop an enhanced voter education effort – one which moved the ECN beyond only using generic messages for the general public, to supplementing generic messages with a more focused targeting of relevant audiences. The current ECN voter registration team is largely comprised of staff members who are dealing with electoral matters for the first time and have no public information/media background or experience. It was not until late in the reporting period that ECN allocated responsibility for voter education to specific members of the secretariat.

A priority for IFES early in the reporting period was to recruit an international and a national voter education consultant to work closely with the ECN voter registration team to review the current methodology and support the development of additional voter education materials and a focused voter education strategy. On 9 August, Kashi Acharaya, was recruited on a six-month contract as the national voter education consultant, and on 19 August, Riccardo Barranca – a consultant with extensive international electoral media and voter education experience, including working as the UNMIN Media Advisor to the ECN for the 2008 Constituent Assembly elections - was recruited as the international voter education consultant on a six-week contract.

By the time the voter education consultants had been recruited (this was stalled due to the delay in the CEPPS III award being approved), all of the print materials for the first phase of the voter registration program had already been produced: 3 types of posters, a brochure and a leaflet in addition to the calendar earlier funded by IFES under the CEPPS II program; as well as a two-minute TV and radio PSA (also funded by IFES under the CEPPS II program), which the ECN broadcast once a day using its own funds throughout most of the reporting period. The consultants were able, however, to make immediate contributions by identifying and summarizing key voter education messages and ensuring they were incorporated into the printed training materials (enumerators' manual, voter registration manual and training video). Furthermore, IFES was able to make recommendations that the ECN largely accepted, as to how additional materials such as the banners, miking and announcements on radio, TV and in print media could be improved.

A key strategic focus of IFES during this reporting period was to review the ECN's current approach to voter education and to identify ways that it could be improved. Voter education strategy is an area where the ECN particularly needs assistance. The ECN voter education guidelines for the voter registration pilot consisted only of a list of very basic actions together with a list of implementation responsibilities. The ECN Guidelines for the roll-out of the national voter registration program no longer include any voter education actions and do not make clear who is responsible for development of the voter education program. As a result, a challenge IFES initially faced was a protracted decision-making process with a lack of clarity as to who was responsible for taking voter education decisions. This is something that IFES addressed with the ECN and IFES now has a good working relationship with an agreed counterpart at under-secretary level responsible for voter education.

Two important strategic voter education documents have been prepared by IFES. Firstly, a voter education strategy that provides the ECN with a tool to understand the key components of voter education and how to use a methodological approach to design a voter education campaign. Importantly, the document identifies the key target audiences for voter education messages and shows how these audiences can most effectively be reached. This strategy document has been presented to the Acting Chief Election Commissioner and been favorably received. At his request, IFES has prepared a PowerPoint presentation for the ECN's use, summarizing the key elements of the voter education strategy document. The second document IFES has prepared, which is designed to work in tandem with the voter education strategy document, is a working document that reviews the current voter education products and activities developed by the ECN, identifies the gaps in voter education activities and includes recommendations as to how these products can be improved (see Annex 2).

In addition, as part of IFES' strategic work to build capacity and professionalize the work of the ECN in this area, a number of specific products have been prepared for the ECN, including three templates for organizing a voter registration photo opportunity, a press conference to promote the voter registration program to media houses and a press release to launch the voter registration program; as well as scripts for radio and TV PSAs for young Nepalis (see activity 3.2 below). All these products can be found in Annex 2.

IFES is also working on two further voter education capacity building initiatives. One is in response to the need for the ECN to be able to work directly with local radio companies and broadcast radio PSAs in local areas at optimal listening times, capitalizing on the fact that radio has the greatest audience reach in Nepal. On 23 September IFES, working with the ECN, arranged for letters to be sent to all district election officers asking them to collect information on the FM radio stations operating in their districts. The completed forms will be returned early in the next reporting

period. Using this information as part of the voter education strategy for phase 2 of the voter registration program, IFES will be able to directly contract local radio stations and help the ECN more effectively target voter education messages at the local level.

Finally, following an ECN press conference held on 12 September and subsequent statements made by ECN officials to the press, it is clear that senior officials within the ECN urgently require media and communication training to ensure coherent and strategic press/media messaging and interactions. Work is underway to prepare for this. For further details see section 2, Strengthening Electoral Management Capacity of the ECN, activity 2.2b).

Results: International and national voter education consultants recruited and working in close collaboration with the ECN. Key voter education messages incorporated into voter registration training materials. Voter education strategy and PowerPoint presentation prepared and presented to the Acting Chief Election Commissioner and positive feedback received. Working document prepared summarizing current voter registration voter education products and activities and recommendations made as to how they can be improved. Templates prepared for ECN use for a) organizing a voter registration photo opportunity, b) a press conference to promote the voter registration program to media houses and c) a press release to launch the voter registration program. Strategy developed and implementation underway to engage local radio stations for phase 2 of the voter registration program.

Activity 3.2 Material and Broadcasting Support for Voter Education Campaigns

Summary: Findings from IFES' survey of the pilot phase of the voter registration project carried out under CEPPS II indicated that young Nepali citizens aged between 16 and 25 had a low participation rate of around 40%, the overwhelming reason being that they did not have a citizenship certificate². In recognition that this target group needs to be specifically addressed, the ECN, with IFES support, prepared scripts for a radio and TV PSA (see Annex 2) to be used to reach and motivate this important young audience, as well as the general public, with a message focusing on the fact that all eligible voters need to have a citizenship certificate in order to register. ECN requested IFES' assistance with the production and broadcasting of radio and TV PSAs with the aim of broadcasting them in parallel, initially for a one month period from 15 October to cover the final weeks of phase 1 of the voter registration project. On 22 September IFES issued three separate *Requests for Quotations* to prospective vendors to submit proposals for: a) the production and broadcast of a 30 second radio PSA; b) the production of a 30 second TV PSA in Nepali; and c) broadcast of the TV PSA. At the end of September, IFES evaluated all submissions and selected the companies to carry out this work based on value for money, track record and experience, and for the broadcasting component, ability to maximize target audience penetration. In addition to broadcasting during the news, IFES will work with the selected company to develop a schedule to show the TV PSA in spots in between programs that particularly appeal to young people. This more detailed planning will take place early in the next reporting period.

IFES has designed the media campaign to support phase 1 of the voter registration program taking into account that significantly more money will be required for radio and TV support for phases 2 and 3 of the voter registration program, and has allocated the media spend accordingly. Given the coverage areas of selected TV and radio networks, there will be some spillover effect during this four week implementation period that will prepare citizens in areas covered by phase 2 of the voter

² Findings from IFES' assessment survey of the pilot phase of voter registration project – July 2010

registration program. As part of IFES' aim to build ECN's voter education capacity, IFES is working closely with the designated ECN voter education counterparts at all stages of this process.

Results: TV and radio PSAs prepared and approved to engage and mobilize young people to take part in the voter registration process. Proposals assessed for the production and broadcast of the radio and TV PSAs for young people and companies selected to carry out the work early in the next reporting period.

4. Monitor, Analyze and Report on the Overall Electoral Process

Activity 4.1 – Ongoing Analysis and Reporting on the Evolving Electoral Environment

Summary: IFES continued monitoring, analyzing and reporting on the progression of electoral related developments with regard to the Constituent Assembly and ECN activities. Regular reports on program activity and analysis of the political and electoral environment were provided verbally and in writing to U.S. Embassy officials, USAID and other relevant stakeholders.

Results: U.S. Embassy and USAID staff and other relevant stakeholders were kept abreast of electoral developments through regular briefings.

Activity 4.2 – Provision of News Clipping Service

Summary: IFES Nepal continued to deliver its daily news clipping service throughout the reporting period. This service is a compilation of online news reports that are relevant to the evolving political and electoral situation in Nepal. News reports are taken from the major news outlets in Nepal, such as the *Kathmandu Post* and the *Himalayan Times* as well as other reputable online sources of news and analysis on Nepali politics.

Results: Daily news clippings service provided to interested subscribers, serving to keep all domestic and international electoral stakeholders well-informed on developments in the political and electoral environment in Nepal.

5. Provision for unforeseen windows of opportunity

Nothing to report this reporting period.

IV. RESULTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS

During the reporting period the IFES Nepal program has achieved the following major results:

1. Strengthening Democratic Legal Framework

Technical Assistance

- Ongoing day-to-day technical advice to the ECN's drafting sub-committee in the development of concept papers for the new political party law, and the electoral management and electoral dispute resolution sections of the new electoral law.
- Finalisation of a concept paper for the political party law, following a workshop involving political parties and other stakeholders.

- With IFES input, two drafting sub-committee meetings on concept paper for electoral management body section of the electoral law have reached substantial agreement on most key issues.
- Inputs from a wide selection of stakeholders obtained at an introductory workshop on electoral dispute resolution mechanisms.

Organizational Capacity Building

- Increased knowledge of ECN's legal department, drafting subcommittee members and civil society and political party stakeholders of international good practices in legal frameworks for political parties, electoral management bodies and electoral dispute resolution.
- International precedents are increasingly cited in concept paper discussions by drafting subcommittee members.

2. Strengthening Electoral Management Capacity of the ECN

Technical Assistance

- A Voter Registration Training Resources Manual for Trainers, a Registration Handbook for voter registration centre staff, an Enumerators Handbook, and a Training Video prepared in collaboration with ECN staff and continuously modified in response to ECN requirements.
- Improvements in voter registration training delivery and voter registration staff performance – though more limited than expected due to inability of ECN to approve final versions of the training products.
- Analysis and reporting on data from survey conducted under CEPPS II program.
- Improvements to ECN's voter registration policies and procedures as a result of survey findings, input from training support team and monitoring of registration centres.
- ECN agreement to program for phase 1 voter registration evaluation workshop.
- Initial training/staffing plans prepared for phase 2 of voter registration

Organizational Capacity Building

- Ongoing positive collaboration between the BRIDGE partners and the ECN.
- Revised BRIDGE program for the next 12 months prepared for discussion and finalization with the ECN in the next reporting period.
- More professional approaches to developing training programs are being adopted by the ECN secretariat.
- Outlines prepared for a one-day communication and media training for ECN members and senior officials and for two training programs on voter registration for senior media executives and TV, radio and newspaper reporters.

3. Expanding and Improving the Delivery of Voter Education

- International and national voter education consultants recruited and working in close collaboration with the ECN.
- Key voter education messages incorporated into voter registration training materials.
- Voter education strategy and PowerPoint presentation prepared and presented to the Acting Chief Election Commissioner and positive feedback received.
- Working document prepared summarizing current voter registration voter education products and activities and recommendations made as to how they can be improved.

- Templates prepared for ECN use for a) organizing a voter registration photo opportunity, b) a press conference to promote the voter registration program to media houses and c) a press release to launch the voter registration program.
- Strategy developed and implementation underway to engage local radio stations for phase 2 of the voter registration program
- TV and radio PSAs prepared and approved to engage and mobilize young people to take part in the voter registration process.
- Proposals assessed for the production and broadcast of the radio and TV PSAs for young people and companies selected to carry out the work early in the next reporting period.

4. Monitor, Analyze and Report on the Overall Electoral Process

- U.S. Embassy and USAID staff and other relevant stakeholders were kept abreast of electoral developments through regular briefings.
- Daily news clippings service provided to interested subscribers, serving to keep all domestic and international electoral stakeholders well-informed on developments in the political and electoral environment in Nepal.

V. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

For the next quarter IFES will focus on the following activities:

1. Strengthening Democratic Legal Framework

- Finalise a draft concept paper for the electoral management body section of the electoral law and conduct national and/or regional workshops on the paper.
- Finalise a draft concept paper on the electoral dispute resolution section of the electoral law.
- Provide information support to regional workshops on electoral systems, and on the concept papers on the political party law and electoral dispute resolution.
- Draft concept papers on electoral campaigns, electoral processes.
- Conduct national workshops on electoral campaigns and electoral processes.
- Commence drafting of concept paper on candidate nominations.

2. Strengthening Electoral Management Capacity of the ECN

- Review, produce and distribute the voter registration training and reference materials drafted in the previous period for the remainder of phase 1 and phase 2.
- Assist ECN with the planning and delivery of cascade training sessions for phase 2 of the voter registration project, especially with training of trainers.
- Assist ECN to produce enumeration forms for phases 2 and 3 of voter registration.
- Assist the ECN to evaluate, through a workshop and research activities, the implementation of phase 1 of voter registration.
- Assist ECN to develop and implement an M&E program for the voter registration project.
- Continue to monitor and work with ECN to improve the framework and implementation of the voter registration project.
- With UNDP ESP assist ECN to develop a response to the UNDP ESP-funded ECN Training Needs Assessment.

- Continued work with the ECN to improve the professionalism of planning and delivery of nation-wide cascaded training programs for ECM temporary staff.
- IFES will develop and implement a series of three media trainings for both ECN staff and media representatives.
- In partnership with UNDP and International IDEA preparation for and implementation of a three-day *Training on Election Management and Pre-election Activities* module for approximately 75 district election officers.
- Continued work with the ECN to ensure gender inclusion is taken into account in programmatic activities and the implementation of the recommendations from the gender mapping assessment, following the ECN's approval of the report which is anticipated early in the next reporting period.

3. Expanding and Improving the Delivery of Voter Education

- IFES will continue to provide technical, capacity building and material support to the ECN's voter education campaign for the voter registration and identification project, working with the ECN to review the voter education effort for phase 1 of the voter registration program and work with them to modify and enhance it for the roll-out of the subsequent phases. Specifically, IFES will work with the selected companies to produce and broadcast the radio and TV PSA for young people aged 16 and 25, as well as directly contracting local radio stations to help the ECN more effectively target voter education messages at the local level.
- IFES will enhance the voter education effort to date through the selection and award of sub-grants to local civil society organizations to develop and deliver voter education campaigns for phases 2 and 3 of the program.

4. Monitoring, Analyzing and Reporting on the Electoral Process

- Ongoing analysis provided to the U.S. Embassy, USAID and other stakeholders on the emerging electoral environment and identification of key issues.

VI. EVALUATION/CONCLUSIONS

- The level of collaboration and coordination between IFES and UNDP's electoral support program continues to be excellent. It has become increasingly clear during phase 1 of the voter registration project the degree to which the ECN's secretariat lacks electoral management experience and the significant capacity building support that is required from both IFES and UNDP. The ECN does not always recognize this and getting agreement on technical assistance is challenging and time consuming. However, the provision of appropriately targeted technical assistance, as has been illustrated this quarter through the work of IFES' voter education and training experts, will continue to be a major area where IFES, in close liaison with UNDP, can add value to the work of the ECN through this five-year program. The current priority for this technical assistance is in support of the voter registration initiative. This support is paramount for improvements in the implementation of the project.
- The delay in the approval of the CEPPS III award resulted in IFES' voter education and training international and national experts for the voter registration process only being in place in August 2010, by which time the ECN had already implemented many decisions relating to the voter education and training programs. This meant that the consultant teams faced a challenging time, in many instances having to work to very tight deadlines with the ECN to implement ECN previously agreed policies and decisions that had significant shortcomings. To

compound this, for the first few weeks the ECN did not appoint a dedicated voter education counterpart to work with IFES. In spite of these factors, the consultants were able to make a major contribution through the preparation of excellent supplementary materials (for example, a voter registration training video, voter registration handbooks and enumeration manuals; a voter education strategy and other activities as described in this report).

- Divisions between the ECN secretariat and the Commission have been a major issue this reporting period, and have exacerbated the problem of getting activities and materials approved within the ECN in a timely manner. In a number of instances approval has been given by the Commission, only to be challenged by the secretariat. A disproportionate amount of IFES staff and consultant time has been spent on reworking materials many times to accommodate the multiple and inconsistent small changes made by different parties within the ECN. This is indicative of the ECN's lack of strategy and its micro management approach to decision making. All too often the big picture is overlooked. IFES, in liaison with UNDP, will address this in the coming months through the provision of day-to-day technical assistance and targeted organizational capacity building
- The electoral legal reform initiative is another area affected by the ECN's lack of decision making ability. In this particular case, the ECN has been unable to finalize the electoral legal reform timetable because it continues to be influenced by the different agendas of competing stakeholders. IFES will continue to work with the various stakeholders to reach a common and workable methodology and timetable to deliver effective electoral legal reform.
- In order for IFES to be able to effectively monitor and evaluate the impact of its activities it will be crucial to have a monitoring and evaluation capacity within the ECN. Currently, such a monitoring and evaluation capacity is seriously lacking and the ECN does not record and analyze data in a systematic manner. Working with the ECN to improve its approach to monitoring and evaluation will be a key focus for IFES over the next year. This is something that IFES is already examining. The ECN has already agreed in principle that it would be helpful for IFES to recruit a national monitoring and evaluation expert to be based in the ECN to help put systems in place and establish a more rigorous approach to data management and monitoring and evaluation.

VI. ATTACHMENTS

- Annex 1. Presentation of the findings of the survey for the pilot phase of the voter registration project.
- Annex 2. Review Recommendations on ECN Voter Education products from September 26 2010.

National Democratic Institute (NDI)
July – September 2010, Quarterly Report
Total budget: \$14,422,000 Expenses to date: \$120,730

I. SUMMARY

Distrust, lack of political skills and weak institutions continued to hinder Nepal's government, leaving citizens' interests and basic needs untended and threatening to derail progress towards a democratic future. Three months after Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal resigned, the interim parliament in Nepal has failed to elect his replacement, leaving the country without an effective government for the entire quarter. The widening rift between the three major parties has paralyzed the fragile peace process, prevented the government from finalizing the budget for the current financial year and stalled the constitution drafting process. With the final extension of the tenure of the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN), political parties have less than four months to find a permanent solution to contentious issues such as the integration of Maoist combatants.

As Nepali political parties enter this pivotal phase in the country's democratic transition, and as citizens become increasingly disenchanted with their representatives, the National Democratic Institute (NDI or the Institute) along with subgrant partners Internews and The Asia Foundation (TAF), begins a comprehensive, five-year program to strengthen democratic political processes in Nepal titled, "*Strengthening Political Parties, Electoral and Legislative Processes (SPELP)*." The program seeks to promote political party development, strengthen capacity for citizen oversight of the electoral process, and support the institutional strengthening of the Constituent Assembly / Parliament and improve its capacity to address constituent needs.

In the first quarter of the grant, NDI deployed two new senior resident staff members and held a series of introductory meetings with political parties, parliamentary committee chairs and secretaries, local partners and other stakeholders to discuss objectives and goals of its five-year program. NDI met with its CEPPS partners and collaborated on drafting a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plan, an annual work plan and a branding strategy and marking plan. NDI also presented on the different roles of a political party in a democratic system at an internal training seminar conducted by the Madheshi Janadhikar Forum, Nepal - Democratic Party.

Next quarter, NDI plans to continue meeting party leaders to determine the districts where NDI will work and seek approval from the national parties to meet with local party branches. NDI will then conduct consultations and assessments of the individual parties at the district level. The Institute will also hold a workshop for parliamentary committees and their staff to discuss future programming and assess their capacity. In addition, comprehensive monitoring and evaluation assessment tools will be created in order to collect baseline data for individual program components.

II. BACKGROUND

After the resignation of Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal on June 30, 2010, President Ram Baran Yadav called on Nepali political parties to form a consensus government and continue with the critical task of developing a new constitution. According to the interim constitution, a simple majority in the Constituent Assembly (CA or parliament) is required to elect a new prime minister (PM). The Nepali Congress (NC) and the Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-Maoist) fielded candidates for the election, NC Vice-President Ram Chandra Poudel and UCPN-

Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal, but after eight rounds of elections, between July 20 and September 26, neither candidate received a majority of votes. The Maoists subsequently withdrew their candidate from the elections, citing the futility of the process.

On September 30, the NC ran unopposed in the ninth round of elections, yet failed to garner a majority. The polling was marked by poor turnout with only 168 of the current 598 members of parliament (MPs) present. Of those, another 61 abstained from voting, which resulted in Poudel winning only 105 votes. Despite their poor showing, the NC had refused to pull their candidate from the race, allegedly because the Maoists had, prior to the election, forged a deal with the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist) (CPN-UML) to form a consensus government. With the Maoists' 236 MPs and the CPN-UML's 108, the two parties could reach the simple majority necessary to elect a new PM. Nevertheless, the Maoists withdrew their candidate after the eighth round, resulting in a low-turnout, NC-only race. According to election rules, the PM election process will continue indefinitely as long as one or more candidates are fielded.

The twelfth NC general convention began in Kathmandu on September 12. Three senior leaders filed nominations for the party president post: Sushil Koirala, Sher Bahadur Deuba and Bhim Bahadur Tamang. Party members elected Koirala as the party's sixth president with 1,652 votes, while his closest contender, former PM Deuba, gained 1,317 votes. In other internal party elections, women were elected to more than 20 percent of the positions in the Central Working Committee.

On September 15, the United Nations Security Council extended the tenure of the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) until January 15, 2011. This was UNMIN's seventh, and final, extension since it entered Nepal in 2007. The extension came as the NC and CPN-UML accused UNMIN, entrusted by the 2006 peace agreement with monitoring the arms and soldiers of the Nepal Army and the Maoist combatants, of favoritism towards the Maoists and interference in the country's political process. Part of UNMIN's mandate has been to monitor the transfer of thousands of Maoist ex-combatants into the government ranks. After a four-point agreement was reached between the UML and the Maoists on September 13, the rehabilitation of the ex-combatants and the dismantling of the 28 cantonments, where they have been confined since the civil war ended in 2006, will come under the supervision of the Army Integration Special Committee.

This quarter, both Indian and Chinese officials visited Nepal amid controversy. In August, India sent former Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran as special envoy to forge consensus among the political parties. Saran expressed India's concern about the political impasse that has affected the peace and constitution drafting process. However, Saran's visit led to accusations by the Maoists of Indian intervention in Nepali affairs. Weeks later, a 21-member Chinese delegation arrived in Kathmandu and met a host of top leaders from major political parties, including caretaker PM Madhav Kumar Nepal. The visit followed shortly after the circulation of an audio tape allegedly implicating Chinese officials with attempting to influence the prime ministerial elections.

A report published this quarter by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), a New York based non-profit organization, ranked Nepal the seventh worst country based on its Impunity Index Rating, which measures the ratio of unsolved journalist murders per one million people. Since 1992, 14 journalists have been reported killed in Nepal.

In this context, NDI and its partners began the SPELP program this quarter to promote political party development, strengthen capacity for citizen oversight of the electoral process, and support the institutional strengthening of the Constituent Assembly / Parliament and improve its capacity to address constituent needs.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

A. Political Party Development

NDI's political party development component focuses on strengthening the internal and external democratic norms and practices of Nepal's major political parties to more effectively contribute to democratic processes. The program is based on continuing coordination and consultation to ensure that all assistance activities respond to the individual needs identified by each party and to any changes in Nepal's political context or legal framework.

Individual Introductory Meetings with Political Party Liaisons and Coordinators

The Institute outlined a meeting schedule with major political parties and the Inter Party Women's Alliance (IPWA) to introduce new NDI senior staff to party leaders and representatives, to discuss the objectives and activities of the program and to prepare for meetings with the political party leadership (Figure 1).

NDI organized a series of introductory meetings with representatives from eight political parties: the NC, the CPN-UML, the Sadhbhawana Party (SP), the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), the Madheshi Janadhikar Forum, Nepal - Democratic (MJF, N-D), the Communist Party of Nepal-Marxist Leninist (CPN-ML), the Tarai Madhesh Loktantrik Party (TMLP) and the Madheshi Janadhikar Forum - Nepal (MJF-N). NDI provided parties with a general overview of the political party development program, outlined next steps related to meetings with the party leadership and identified the districts where the Institute planned to conduct political party assessments. All political parties expressed strong interest in NDI's technical assistance and were open to participating in a baseline assessment. These party assessments will determine individual party's strengths and weaknesses so that NDI's assistance can be tailored to each party's specific needs.

NDI met with 10 steering committee members of the IPWA to provide a briefing on the political party assistance program. The Institute assured IPWA members of continued assistance and support to the alliance's constituent relations initiatives and further expansion of district-level subcommittees.

Figure 1: Schedule of Political Party Meetings

<i>Political Party</i>	<i>Party Representatives</i>
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"We have a long standing relationship with NDI, and we have benefited a lot from NDI's TOT programs in the past."

- Anil Kumar Jha, General Secretary of Sadhbhawana Party, September 9, 2010.

NC	Hon. Pushpa Bhusal, CA Member/Central Committee Member (CCM) Sunil Bhandari, CCM
CPN-UML	Astha Laxmi Shakya, CCM Ganga Lal Tuladhar, CCM

RPP	Thakur Singh Tharu, CCM Bhuwan Pathak, CCM/Training Dept. Head
SP	Hon. Anil Jha, CA Member/General Secretary



MJF,N-D	Rameshwor Raya Yadav, Vice-President Bharatendu Mallik, Training Dept. Head
CPN-ML	Hon. Janak Kumari Chalise, CA Member/CCM Kishore Poudel, Training Dept. Head
TMLP	Govinda Chaudhary, General Secretary Brikesh Chandra Lal, Vice-President
MJF-N	Ratneshwor Raya Kyastha, Spokesperson
IPWA	Hon. Sita Khadka, President Hon. Kalyani Rizal, Vice-President Hon. Yashodha Subedi, General Secretary Hon. Sabitra Bhusal, Secretary Neena Bhetwal, Treasurer Hon. Jay Puri Ghatrri, Steering Committee Member (SCM) Sashi Shrestha, SCM Pushpa Thakur, SCM Asha Chaturvedi, SCM Sita Mahat, SCM

MJF, N-D Training of Trainers Opening Session

On September 14, NDI attended the opening session of the MJF, N-D's three-day training of trainers (TOT) workshop for senior party members and parliamentary representatives. The party was formed only 18 months ago and has been developing a series of internal party documents, such as bylaws and rules of procedure. The party's government and parliamentary leaders, including the deputy prime minister, ministers, MPs and central committee members attended the opening session. NDI spoke at the event about the Institute's general mission, functional areas and the political party development program.

'Role of Political Parties in a Multiparty Democracy' Presentation

On September 16, NDI responded to a request from the MJF, N-D to contribute to their internal party leadership seminar. NDI presented on the different roles of a political party in a democratic multiparty system and the importance of political party organization and management to an audience of more than 50 representatives, including the party secretary general, deputy prime minister, members of parliament and central committee members. After a question and answer period, the party leadership asked for further technical assistance from NDI. The Institute distributed 75 copies of its publication, 'Minimum Standards for the Democratic Functioning of Political Parties,' and sent an additional 400 copies to the party at their request.

NDI Resident Program Director (right) with MJF, N-D leaders during the inauguration session.

Meeting with the Elections Commission of Nepal (ECN) Consultant Kare Vollan

On September 10, NDI met with Nepal Elections Commission (ECN) consultant Kare Vollan to discuss the commission's work on political party law reform, a code of conduct and electoral laws. On September 13, the ECN solicited the opinions of the political parties to be incorporated in a second draft version of the law. Given NDI's initial plan to assist with political party law reform and code of conduct, the Institute is reviewing how it can best assist in this regard without duplicating efforts.

CA member asking a question during the presentation.

Based on initial consultations with USAID, NDI is interested in reviewing the second draft of the political party law and providing comparative technical feedback either through its engagement with the political parties or through the ECN. The Institute will also remain engaged with civil society and the media and highlight any weaknesses in the law or code of conduct, when appropriate.



"We thank you for your contribution to our internal training of trainers with this presentation and would like to request a formal partnership with NDI in order to benefit from your technical assistance and expertise."

- Bijay Kumar Gachhadhar, President, MJF, N-D and Deputy Prime Minister, September 16, 2010.

"Our party is only 18 months old. This kind of interaction is highly appreciated and we look forward to continue our partnership in the coming days."

- Sharad Singh Bhandari, Central Committee Member, MJF, N-D, and Minister of Tourism, September 16, 2010.

Donor Coordination Meeting on Political Party Reform

On September 30, NDI participated in an international donor coordination meeting on political party reform, convened at USAID's initiative. Representatives from the United Kingdom (UK) Department for International Development (DFID), the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Norwegian Embassy and the U.S. Embassy attended. NDI made a brief presentation on its political parties component. All participants agreed to convene again to discuss establishing a political party steering committee as a main coordination body for donors.

B. Legislative Strengthening

NDI's legislative strengthening activities are designed to enhance the technical capacity of the legislature and begin to broaden and deepen public participation in legislative processes, during and beyond the current transitional period. The following activities took place during this reporting period.

Public Hearings, Community Dialogues and Round Table Discussions

NDI held a series of meetings with Prakash Mani Sharma, Executive Director of the Forum for the Protection of Public Interest (Pro Public), to discuss the forthcoming public hearings, community dialogues and roundtable discussion program to be held in 10 districts. During the meetings, NDI and Pro Public finalized the criteria for the selection of districts and local NGOs, which included:

- Selecting two districts from each of Nepal's five development regions;
- Selecting at least one mountain or hill district and one Tarai district from each development region;
- Selecting parliamentarians from diverse political parties to ensure variation in political party representation across all ten districts;
- Selecting districts where security conditions are appropriate for NDI staff, its partners and local NGOs to implement program activities effectively;
- Selecting districts with direct accessibility by road and/or air transport.

Based on these selection criteria, NDI and Pro Public tentatively selected ten districts: Dhankuta and Siraha from the eastern region; Nuwakot and Bara from central region; Syangja and Kapilvastu from the western region; Surkhet and Dailekh from the mid-western region; and Doti and Kanchanpur from the far western region. NDI and Pro Public began the process to identify potential NGOs in the targeted 10 districts. Criteria for the selection of local NGOs include:

- Must be registered as an NGO at the District Administrative Office and Social Welfare Council (SWC).
- Must file annual audits;
- Must be actively working in the districts where NDI's program activities will be implemented;
- Must be involved in activities related to democracy, human rights, good governance, or transparency;
- Must have a functioning Board with an annual general meeting, regular board meetings, transparent selection of board members and staff. Should have an open, democratic and transparent management system;

- Must be willing to develop collaborative relationships with government offices, NGOs, community based organizations and networks.

The NGO selection process will continue in the next quarter.

Effective Committee Work

NDI met with parliamentary committee chairs and secretaries (Figure 2) to introduce NDI senior staff, provide a general overview of the effective committee program component and gauge interest from the respective committees. NDI and committee chairs discussed in detail the design of the program, including possible topics for workshops, support from NDI for holding committee hearings outside the capital, and technical assistance on the sub-committee system, quorum requirements, meeting schedules and formulation of agendas. In addition, NDI was briefed on the various jurisdictions of the committees and discussed with the chairs the oversight functions of the committee. Committee chairs and their staff expressed interest in collaborating with NDI over the course of the program.

Figure 2: Parliamentary Chair and Secretary Meeting List

Committee	Chairperson	Committee Secretary
Committee on Women, Children and Social Welfare	Hon. Sandhya Dev	Birendra Karki
Development Committee	Hon. Jitendra Prasad Sonar	Himlal Subedi
Legislative Committee	Hon. Yashoda Gurung (Subedi)	Bharat Gautam
State Affairs Committee	Hon. Ram Nath Dhakal	Mukunda Sharma
Finance and Labor Relations Committee	Hon. Hari Rokka, Chair, Sub-Committee	

In addition, the Institute sent letters to the speaker of parliament and to the secretary general to inform them of NDI's upcoming events to support the Parliament and to introduce new NDI senior staff.

Committee/Public Hearing Manual

NDI began drafting a manual on committee public hearings, utilizing NDI's experience in other regions and drawing on internationally recognized practices. This specific manual is intended for use by committee chairs, members and staff to help them in the organization and management of effective hearings. The manual will be developed with input and advice from the chairs and members of the parliamentary committees.

C. Monitoring and Evaluation

In the first quarter of the grant, NDI completed a detailed annual work plan and timeline for the first year of the program and prepared a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan for the duration of the SPELP program. In early September, an M&E expert from NDI's home office in Washington, DC traveled to Nepal to assist in formulating the five-year plan. NDI held internal

workshops to refine component indicators, expand on critical assumptions, assess risks and specify staff members' M&E roles and responsibilities.

NDI met with IFES and TAF country staff and discussed each partner's role and their M&E requirements. NDI then hosted an M&E meeting with CEPPS partners and USAID to discuss M&E coordination and reporting requirements. Based on feedback from the partners and NDI staff, the M&E Plan was developed and included the results framework, the M&E narrative and the performance management and evaluation plan.

On September 29, NDI attended a day-long democracy and governance (DG) partners meeting organized by USAID that introduced partners to its DG assistance objective results framework. Partners working on similar objectives were grouped together to rank and record indicators most effective for measuring their intended results as well as suggest better indicators.



D. Meetings/Consultations/Events

Throughout the quarter, NDI met with representatives from CEPPS partner IFES and subgrant partners, Internews and TAF. NDI also held a series of meetings with USAID officials to discuss the CEPPS III agreement, work plan, and monitoring and evaluation plans.

The Institute also met with officials from the UNDP-Center for Constitutional Dialogue, the National Election Observation Committee (NEOC), the Federation of Nepalese Journalist (FNJ), USAID/Nepal Transitional Initiative (NTI) and the ANTENNA Foundation to discuss areas for collaboration and assistance for program activities under the new CEPPS III grant.

On September 2, local NDI partner IPWA organized a protest march in Kathmandu to pressure political parties to end the deadlock in parliament and form a consensus government. More than 500 women, including members from 15 political parties and human rights activists, took part in the rally. On September 4, the IPWA organized a half-day event with more than 60 senior political leaders, including Hon. C.P. Gajurel, Hon. Renu Yadav, and Hon. Meena Pandey, to discuss the inconclusive prime ministerial elections and to seek a commitment from the major political parties on the formation of a national consensus government. Civil society organizations and the media also participated, and an NDI representative attended. The rally and the discussions with parties received wide coverage in the national media. Both IPWA events were supported by the U.K. Department for International Development, indicating that NDI's partner continues to be sustainable and has been successful in securing additional funding from other donors.

On September 17, NDI was invited to observe the 12th General Convention of Nepali Congress party.

IV. RESULTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Objective 1: Political parties more effectively contribute to democratic processes in Nepal.

- After NDI's presentation to MJF, N-D members on strengthening internal party democracy, party leaders and members of the central committee announced their commitment, before an audience of 50 senior party members, to adjusting the party's structure to ensure it is more inclusive and representative of women, youth and other historically marginalized groups. The party will begin by revising its organizational chart to reflect the new structure.

Objective 3: The CA/Legislature Parliament more effectively fulfills its democratic functions

- The Institute established a partnership with Pro Public to implement the upcoming public hearings, community dialogues and round table discussions and developed criteria for the selection of districts and NGOs.

V. EVALUATION

In NDI's first quarter under the new SPELP grant, the Institute began laying the foundation for the five-year program. The first series of meetings with program stakeholders provided an opportunity for NDI to introduce new senior staff, discuss the program's political party and legislative components and explain the Institute's practical and collaborative approach to technical assistance.

Parties expressed their interest in NDI's assistance and willingness to engage in political party assessments at the national and local levels with various party members. A number of political parties reaffirmed their commitment to specific programmatic components, such as the creation of a political party advisory committee and future leadership academy, which were discussed during initial program design meetings with USAID and NDI several months ago.

Similarly, during the Institute's introductory meetings with parliamentary committees, committee chairs and staff conveyed their interest in providing input on the public hearing manual and collaborating with NDI in organizing committee hearings and other program activities.

Despite ongoing tension between political parties and gridlock in the CA/Parliament this quarter, NDI's stakeholders confirmed their intent to participate in the SPELP program. This represents an early step toward reaching the program's intermediate results and eventually the long-term objectives.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

A. Political Party Development

- NDI plans to meet with the leadership of all nine political party partners to introduce NDI senior staff, determine the districts where baseline assessments will be conducted and seek approval from the parties to meet with local party branches.
- NDI will adapt its general political party baseline assessment questionnaire to the Nepal context, and begin its baseline assessments at the end of October.
- The Institute will start its field trips in the eastern and central region, going to Dhankuta, Terathum, Dhulikhel and Dolakha to conduct consultations and assessment of the parties. NDI plans to meet with various party members as well as with representatives of civil society organizations in these districts.

- NDI and the IPWA will organize a TOT in Kathmandu, expand its district committees and conduct capacity building workshops in the remaining districts.

B. Legislative Strengthening

- NDI will hold consultation meetings with the remaining committee chairs.
- NDI will hold meetings with the Secretary General of the Parliament Secretariat and Speaker of the Legislature-Parliament to introduce NDI senior staff and to garner support and collaboration for the Institute's legislative strengthening component.
- NDI will hold an introductory workshop for committee chairs and staff to discuss international practices, to assess Nepal's experience with effective committee work and to plan for committee-specific activities.
- NDI will consult with the Parliament Secretariat and universities to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with viable universities. In addition, NDI will work with faculties from various universities to solicit applications.
- NDI and Pro Public will identify and select potential district-level NGOs in 10 targeted districts to implement public hearings, community dialogues and round table discussions.

C. Monitoring and Evaluation

- NDI will create assessment tools and begin to collect baseline data. This information will be used to tailor technical assistance to stakeholder needs and provide a benchmark against which programming will later be assessed.